

SENATE—Monday, March 20, 2000

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, Sovereign of history and personal Lord of our lives, this week we join with Jews throughout the world in the joyous celebration of Purim. We thank You for the inspiring memory of Queen Esther who, in the fifth century B.C., threw caution to the wind and interceded with her husband, the King of Persia, to save the exiled Jewish people from persecution. The words of her uncle Mordecai sound in our souls: "You have come to the kingdom for such a time as this."—Esther 4:14.

Lord of circumstances, we are moved profoundly by the way You use individuals to accomplish Your plans and arrange what seem to be coincidences to bring about Your will for Your people. You have brought each of us to Your kingdom for such a time as this. You whisper in our souls, "I have plans for you, plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."—Jeremiah 29:11.

Grant the Senators a heightened sense of the special role You have given them to play in the unfolding drama of American history. Give them a sense of destiny and a deep dependence on Your guidance and grace.

On Purim, we renew our commitment to fight against sectarian intolerance in our own hearts and religious persecution in so many places in our world. This is Your world; let us not forget that "though the wrong seems oft so strong, You are the Ruler yet." Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable CHUCK HAGEL, a Senator from the State of Nebraska, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The distinguished majority leader is recognized.

Mr. LOTT. I thank the Chair.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Today the Senate will be in a period of morning business

throughout the day, and tomorrow the Senate will begin consideration of H.R. 5, the Social Security earnings test legislation. Under a previous agreement, there will be approximately 4 hours of debate with three amendments in order to the bill. I expect votes will occur during Tuesday's session of the Senate on one or two of the amendments to the bill. However, I expect final passage will not occur until Wednesday morning at approximately 10 o'clock. I will need to consult further with the Democratic leadership as to the exact time for that vote.

During the remainder of the week, the Senate will also consider any of the following items: Crop insurance legislation that was reported out of the Agriculture Committee a couple of weeks ago, plus any nominations from the Executive Calendar that might be cleared. Therefore, votes should be expected throughout the remainder of the week, certainly Wednesday and Thursday. Also, Senators should be on notice that we expect to begin the budget resolution next week, the week of March 27, and Senators may expect votes likely will occur on Friday, March 31.

We had indicated earlier in the year that if we saw a Friday where there would very likely be some votes, we would let Senators know as soon as we could, in order to comply with the budget resolution rules, which is up to 50 hours of debate and amendments in order. Senators will recall that sometimes we have a number of amendments at the end of the process, so it could take us into Thursday night or over into that Friday, March 31. Of course, if there is a change in that, we will let Senators know, but we need to conclude that budget resolution as soon as possible so the Appropriations Committee can go forward with its bills.

SOCIAL SECURITY EARNINGS

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I will take just a few minutes of my leader's time to talk about the Social Security earnings limitation.

I am very proud that the Senate is going to be taking up that issue this week and that we have a unanimous consent agreement which will limit us to only two or three amendments. One of those amendments is a technical correction, and then we have one by Senator KERREY of Nebraska and one by Senator GREGG of New Hampshire.

We have talked for years about the unfairness of Social Security recipients losing Social Security money if they need to continue working or want to

continue working. At a time when we have a need for seniors who are 65, 66, 67 years old to meet the demands of our increased job availability market in America, it is the logical thing to do. Unfortunately, for many years we talked about it and did not do anything.

The House of Representatives deserves credit for taking the lead on this issue, and now we find it is developing bipartisan support of Republicans and Democrats in the Senate and an indication that the President will sign it. It is long overdue, and I think it is an important issue. I hope a number of Senators will comment on it today and that we will have debate on the two amendments tomorrow and conclude this no later than Wednesday morning.

So I am pleased we are able to proceed in this way, and I look forward to completing action on this important legislation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

SOCIAL SECURITY, THE BUDGET RESOLUTION, AND THE FEDERAL RESERVE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, we on this side of the aisle look forward to working on eliminating the Social Security earnings limitation. I just returned from Nevada. It was amazing the number of people who came up to me and said, Are you going to do finally something about eliminating the earnings test on Social Security? As the leader has said, we have talked about this a long time but done nothing. It is time now that we join together, as we are going to do Wednesday, to pass this important bill.

This legislation will pass overwhelmingly with both Democrats and Republicans voting for it. Why? Because the America of today is much different from the America of 1935 when Social Security came into being. People are living much longer lives, healthier lives, more productive lives, and there is no reason in the world why we do not have people working as long as they want and as hard as they want. We need to remove this limitation. We have a problem in America today in its lack of productivity. This legislation will help a great deal because some of the most productive people in the world are people who are over age 65. So I look forward to joining Senators on both sides of the aisle to make sure we pass this bill as quickly as possible. As the leader said, we should do it Wednesday afternoon.